



United States Bankruptcy Court

Central District of California
Roybal Federal Building & Courthouse
255 East Temple Street, Suite 1360
Los Angeles, California 90012

Vincent P. Zurzolo
Chief Bankruptcy Judge

Ph: 213-894-3755
Fax: 213-894-5048

December 7, 2009

An Open Letter to the Bankruptcy Bar

The Bankruptcy Judges of the Central District of California would like to urge you to consider volunteering for one of the bankruptcy *pro bono* opportunities available in your area. As our filings continue to rise to unprecedented levels, the number of low-income *pro se* individuals in our court has also risen. As you might imagine, the organizations currently assisting low-income people in bankruptcy are seeing hundreds of families on the brink of foreclosure or in other economic distress. Recently, however, the number of newly homeless families contacting these groups has also risen.

Volunteer opportunities range from just a few hours every other month at a clinic to full representation in a Chapter 7 case or adversary proceeding. Consumer bankruptcy training can usually be provided where necessary. While most requests are for debtor assistance, low-income creditor assistance is also needed. The programs are structured so that traditionally creditor or business attorneys may volunteer without a concern about conflicts or becoming a debt relief agency. The vast majority of the people coming to these programs cannot afford counsel, but attorney referrals are also made through these organizations where appropriate.

Even a brief consultation with an attorney can make a big difference to a *pro se* party. Attorney assistance also greatly helps the court and other litigants. The attached list will soon appear on the Court's website under the tab "Don't Have an Attorney" where you can find the contact information for the group in your area along with the types of opportunities available. We encourage you to contact one of these groups and see if there might be a way to contribute your expertise in these difficult economic times. To those of you who already volunteer or provide badly needed *pro bono* help in other ways, we say **thank you**. Your efforts help the court be more responsive to all litigants, regardless of income level.